• The Common Core’s beginnings are not linked to Race to the Top. Development of the Common Core State Standards was driven by the nation’s governors and state superintendents who wanted to collaborate on a set of content standards that would be strong and describe the most essential things that students should learn in mathematics and English language arts.

• Adoption of Career and College Ready State Standards earned points for states applying for Race to the Top funding. The Common Core is one such set of standards but adopting the Common Core State Standards was not a requirement for receiving the competitive Race to the Top grant.

• Every time any state or local school district adopts a set of content standards, there will be individuals who disagree with some parts of these standards. There are no required texts for English language arts under the Common Core. There is a list of examples of text that would be appropriate for students at different levels, but choices about what students read in order to meet the content standards are left to local teachers and educators.

• North Carolina’s Standard Course of Study in social studies includes the reading of foundational documents that are key in United States history. In technical education courses, students are encouraged to read technical documents if pertinent to the subject at hand. For example, students in construction trades courses might be required to read sections of building code so that they become familiar with reading technical text for comprehension.

• The Common Core State Standards are not a curriculum. They are a set of content standards for teaching and learning. Teachers develop their curricula using the content standards and all other instructional resources that they deem appropriate.

• States do not have to adopt the Common Core State Standards.

• The Common Core State Standards are not a “federal government takeover of public education.” They are a set of standards developed with participation from many states. States do not have to use them if they don’t want to. North Carolina adopted the Common Core State Standards through the legislatively mandated process and was not coerced by the federal government into doing so.

• North Carolina has had a Standard Course of Study for more than 80 years, and the adoption of the Common Core State Standards as our Standard Course of Study in English language arts and mathematics still leaves many decisions about curriculum selections, pacing, and rigor up to local educators. States may select all, some or none of the Common Core State Standards. If a state wanted to be recognized as a full implementer of the Common Core, that state could still add another 15 percent of its own unique standards and still be recognized. That still gives North Carolina significant leeway to add content standards. For example, a content standard in cursive handwriting certainly could be added and North Carolina would still be within this limit. Common Core Standards in mathematics, for example, only cover three years of high school math, and North Carolina will continue to develop and support the fourth year of high school math content standards as well as other math course content standards.

• Common Core State Standards cover what is considered essential for career and college readiness for students.
• It is true that North Carolina schools will not receive student grades on the new end-of-grade and end-of-course assessments given at the end of the 2012-13 school year until the fall of 2013. This is not because of the Common Core State Standards. North Carolina has new assessments developed to align with the new content standards, and state testing officials have to go through a standard-setting process to develop scoring levels for each category of student performance. This process involves classroom teachers and others. When new tests are introduced, this process must occur. North Carolina has done this in prior years when new tests were used to measure new content standards. This is not a new phenomenon. We have delayed announcement of scores at least three other times when standards have changed.

• End-of-grade test items in Reading and Math and the end-of-course exams in English II and Algebra were field tested prior to initial use.

• End-of-course exam scores do count in the final grades for students at local discretion. This year, because of the test score delays, a locally developed score was used in students’ final grade for end-of-course exam courses. Using this was a local decision this year and not required by the State Board of Education. End-of-grade test scores do not count in students’ letter grades although they are useful in helping teachers and principals make student promotion decisions.

• Some people are confusing the Common Core State Standards exams with measures of student learning. Measures of Student Learning are common examinations developed by North Carolina in approximately 30 subjects that are not tested under the state’s accountability model. These exams, intended to replace teacher-developed final exams, are to determine how well teachers helped students grow academically over the course or year. This measure of a student’s academic growth is needed as one factor in teacher evaluation. It is a local school district decision about how to count scores on common exams in students’ grades for particular courses.

• North Carolina teachers have had the Standard Course of Study upon which the new measures of student learning were based since 2010. Professional development has been occurring statewide for teachers to prepare to teach to the new standards for at least two years.

• Students are asked to provide open-ended answers to some math questions. This ensures that students can provide the answer without guessing from a list of options.

• Implementing the Common Core State Standards is no different in cost than implementing North Carolina’s ongoing revisions to its long-standing Standard Course of Study. This is part of the work that North Carolina’s public school system does annually.

• North Carolina has used Race to the Top grant funding to support professional development in Common Core State Standards and other essential standards.

• The Common Core does not require student data collection. North Carolina public schools do not ask students questions about religious affiliation. State and federal privacy laws apply to certain health and income student data collected by the public schools. But again, the Common Core testing does not require data collection on students.